

T H E
L O U N G E R.

[N^o XLVI.]

Saturday, Dec. 17. 1785.

MY Readers will have observed that the office of the Lounger has of late been almost a sinecure, his correspondents having saved him the trouble of composition. The paper of to-day is also a communication, which, from the sex and accomplishments of the author, as well as the flattering manner in which she expresses herself, gratifies my vanity as much as my indolence.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

S I R,

THE genteel but pointed irony with which you mention the follies of our sex, and the pains you take, in your admired Essays, for our instruction and improvement, will, I make no doubt, have some influence on the minds of those who are thoughtless, but not dissipated; and who, though hurried down the stream of pleasure, are not yet enough hardened to disregard the admonitions of virtue.

Among young people of this description, many ladies may be led to the attainment of mental accomplishments, in hopes of recommending themselves to the notice of the other sex; who, from their superior education, and more solid judgement, would, one might presume, be more guided by the dictates of good sense, than led by the blind caprices of Fashion. But, methinks, Sir, it would not be altogether fair to mislead your inexperienced female readers with such fallacious hopes. Tell them as much as you please of the internal rewards that belong to virtue: That to embellish, in early life, their minds with taste, and to enlighten their understandings with some degree of knowledge, will prove to them an inexhaustible source of delight in the lonely hours of solitude, and procure veneration and respect to their declining years. But on the fine fellows who, in our days, deign to mingle in the female world, such accomplishments will have as much influence, as the harmonious compositions of Handel on the deaf pupils of Mr *Braidwood*.

To be distinguished by your sex, is more or less the wish of every female heart. To solicit that distinction, Fancy is put to the torture to dress out the votaries of Fashion; and, to deserve it, the more judicious, endeavour to adorn their minds with knowledge, taste, and sentiment. Which of these most frequently attain their end, you, Sir, who frequent the circles of the great and gay, can be at no loss to determine.

Z z

As

As I was early taught to mark the characters, and make reflections on the events that passed before me in life, short as that life has been, and few and simple as have been its tranquil scenes, perhaps a sketch of it may not be altogether unworthy your perusal.

I am the daughter of a clergyman, whose virtues adorn humanity, and whose character in every respect does honour to his profession. A long attachment had subsisted between him and my mother, before the pride of her relations (who piqued themselves on their high descent) would consent to her being made happy for ever by an union with one whom those relations considered as her inferior: But the constancy of their affection at length subdued every obstacle; and their life has ever since been one continued scene of domestic felicity. As I was their only child, my education was the prime object of their attention. To procure me the more elegant accomplishments, they appropriated the savings of their œconomy; while, with the tenderest sollicitude, they themselves endeavoured to form my manners, to cultivate my understanding, and to cherish the virtues of my heart.

The friendly terms on which we lived with the patron of our parish, whose lady took a particular liking to me, gave me frequent opportunities of mixing with polite company. The natural gaiety of my temper, and steady sincerity of my heart, gained me the good-will of all my companions; with some of whom I early contracted the most tender friendship,—a friendship which has increased with our increasing years, and received strength from every incident of pain or pleasure that has befallen us in life.

By the gentlemen, I found myself almost invariably treated according to their ideas of my rank and consequence. Of all the numbers who came to Castle —, excepting an old naval officer, many traits of whose character, though cast in somewhat of a rougher mould, bore a strong resemblance to that of your worthy friend Colonel Caustic, I do not remember to have met with one who thought it possible the daughter of a country parson could be as well informed upon any subject as the heiress of a Baronet; and after I have, by Lady —'s desire, played on her forte piano, some of the finest concertos of Bach and Abel to an unlistening audience, I have heard the same gentlemen applaud with every mark of rapture the fashionable Miss Fanny Flirter rattling over some insipid fragment of a new opera tune.

At the earnest solicitation of a sister of my father's, married to a respectable merchant in the capital, I one winter spent a few months with her in town. I had here a more ample opportunity of observing that universal passion for what is called *style* in life, than I had hitherto met with. The notice taken of me by our patroness Lady —, who always passed the winter in the metropolis, and to whose parties, either at home or at public places, I had a general invitation, made me esteemed quite the *ton* by the set of men who visited my uncle. I was often distressed by their civilities, and put out of countenance by their eagerness to show me attention; while by the gentlemen in her Ladyship's suite I was considered of no more importance than any other piece of furniture in the drawing-room: but, like yourself, Sir, though silent, I was not always idle; and, while unthought of, and unspoke to, made such remarks on the scene before me as I hope will be of service to me through life.

From

From Edinburgh, at the request of my mother's relations, I went to the county of —. These great relations had taken no notice of her since her marriage, but now received me in the most cordial manner. I was immediately introduced by them to their acquaintances in a genteel and populous neighbourhood, and was every where received with the respect due to the ally, and what is more, the very probable heiress of an ancient and wealthy family. Where-ever I appeared, I was loaded with caresses. A gentleman of the first distinction engaged me for his partner at an election-ball, which happened soon after my arrival in the country; and the attention paid me by him, and a few others of equal rank, soon brought me completely into fashion. I was now discovered to possess qualifications which no one before had ever thought of imputing to me. My former friends had indeed sometimes complimented me with the appellation of a lively sensible-enough sort of girl; but now, to all the charms of elegance in manner, I added those of the most brilliant wit; and though it was allowed I could not, strictly speaking, be termed handsome, yet my features spoke such animation, and my eyes beamed with so much sensibility,—that Beauty herself would have had but little chance beside me. Was it any wonder, that every latent spark of vanity in my heart should have been kindled, on thus finding myself a distinguished figure in a scene of higher life than any I had yet witnessed. I was, alas! but too soon intoxicated with the adulation I received; and with the most poignant regret I took leave of people, who I thought had discovered such just discernment of merit, although it was to return to the fond arms of my beloved parents.

The flattering scenes I left, had made too deep an impression to be easily erased. I found the amusements of my former life had become insipid, its employments irksome and fatiguing: and as our great neighbours were now in London, I had little opportunity of diverting my chagrin by any change of company. It was even with difficulty I was prevailed on to accompany my most intimate friend to the county-assembly, as I knew I would there find myself in a very different situation to that in which I figured at the balls in —. But what was my delight, on soon seeing enter the assembly-room, along with a family of the first rank, two of my most intimate acquaintances in that loved county! As both the gentlemen had *there* honoured me with their particular attention, my heart beat with rapture at the idea of what delight they must receive from this unexpected interview. But I soon found these gentlemen wisely considered that I now moved in a different sphere. They avoided seeming to observe me as long as possible; and when at length obliged to do it, passed their compliments with a certain careless air; which may not improperly be styled a well-bred sort of incivility. A moment's reflection on this little striking incident restored me to my senses; and I returned home with the most cheerful alacrity, as to the certain asylum of happiness and tranquillity.

In a little time after I had thus recovered from the delirium of flattery and folly, our society received a considerable acquisition in our acquaintance with *Dorilas*. This gentleman, who had lately come to the country in pursuit of health and rural amusements, was first noticed by my father for his regular attendance at church; and, by the politeness

politeness of his manners, and solidity of his conversation, soon recommended himself to his particular regard. He appeared to be one of ^{those} ~~has~~ those favourites of Nature, whom she endowed with her best gifts, a good understanding, and a benevolent heart. His mind seemed enlightened by science, enlarged by a knowledge of the world, and, we were told, had been softened by the correcting hand of misfortune. He came frequently to the parsonage-house, to which he had at all times a general invitation; and where he was ever welcomed by the unaffected kindness of plain, but genuine hospitality. As Dorilas seemed to pique himself on his retirement from the more dissipated scenes of life, he always appeared pleased with our rural simplicity; but no sooner did Dorilas get intimately acquainted with the families of higher rank, and found himself established in a circle of greater *style*, than he omitted his visits at the parsonage-house, and even mentioned its inhabitants with that sort of contemptuous ridicule, which, tho' it may be a very fashionable *maniere de parler*, gives a deeper wound to the feelings, than the envenomed sting of calumny can inflict.—We were all hurt at being thus disappointed in a character of which we had formed so high an idea; and when on a visit to my friend at the county-town, I accidentally met with Dorilas, I found it impossible to conceal the resentment with which his conduct had inspired me. But when I saw his surprise at the apparent coldness of my manner, I began to reflect, that should we be mistaken, or misinformed, I might, by my seeming caprice, have done an injury to feelings, perhaps no less delicately susceptible of it than my own. I therefore resolved to acquaint him with what we had heard, and frankly to tell him our opinion of his behaviour; but in the only opportunity that ever after offered, I was so embarrassed by the stately distance of his manner, and the difficulty of introducing the subject with becoming delicacy and spirit, that I found it impossible to fulfil my intention. The little conversation that passed only served him with a pretence to put an entire end to our acquaintance; and in six months after, Dorilas set out on a gay party to the German Spa without deigning to inquire even for my father.

Such is the incense offered at the shrine of Fashion! not only by the vain and giddy, but even by the sentimental and judicious! and such the attentions people who shine not in that brilliant sphere may expect to meet with in the world! But happy! thrice happy they! according to the wise maxims of my venerable parent, who are endowed with that true greatness of mind, which can look down with equal indifference on the soothing praise of flattery, or the scornful sneer of pride; who, independent of the favour of the fickle, and the regards of the inconstant, derive a happiness from the humble consciousness of superior virtue, that infinitely transcends all which the world can bestow.

Afraid of having already too long trespassed on your patience, I now hasten to conclude, with assuring you how much I am

Your admiring reader,

ALMERIA.

EDINBURGH:

Published by WILLIAM CREECH; by whom Communications
from Correspondents are received.

Next Saturday will be published N^o XLVII.